

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CU-04 IO-12 EUR-25 NIC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-0 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 OMB-01 EB-11 AGR-20

COME-00 TRSE-00 STR-08 RSR-01 SR-02 ORM-03 /169 W
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R 170545 Z APR 73

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6634

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJ: INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1973

REF: HONG KONG 1235

SUMMARY. INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVECOPMENTS THUS FAR THIS YEAR
HAVE UNFOLDED ALONG THE LINES OF A MAO- CHOU STRATEGY FOR BALANCING
A NEW RULING COALITION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOREIGN OBSERVER, PROVIDED HE READ PEKING'S JANUARY 1
EDITORIAL, COULD HAVE SKIPPED THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1973 AND MISSED
LITTLE THAT WAS OBVIOUS ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE IN CHINA.
FROM SURFACE APPEARANCED, THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF THE YEAR SAW
THE REGIME MOVING AHEAD ON THE MODEST, OBLIQUE POLITICAL TASKS IT
HAD SET OUT IN THE EDITORIAL, WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING MAJOR SURPRISES.
THE REHABILITATION IN MID- APRIL OF TENG HSIAO- PING, THE SECOND-
RANKING VICTIM OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, WAS A MAJOR POLITICAL
EVENT, BUT ONE THAT HAD BEEN IN CAREFUL PREPARATION BEHIND THE
SCENES FOR A YEAR. IT STRENGTHENED THE POSITION OF THE

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REHABILITATED CADRE AND THIS IS AN IMPORTANT, BUT CALCULATED, ADVANCE IN THE STRATEGY MAO AND CHOU HAVE FOR RECONSTRUCTING THE REGIME.

2. OTHER ELEMENTS OF THAT STRATEGY INCLUDE AVOIDING DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE MILITARY STRONGMEN IN THE REGIONS AND PROVINCES; WHITTLING AWAY AT THEIR " ONE MAN RULE" BY INSERTING INTO THEIR RULING GROUPS CIVILIAN CADRE, MOSTLY REHABILITATED VETERAN CADRE; AND REBUILDING MASS ORGANIZATIONS AS AN AUXILIARY CHANNEL FOR COMMUNICATING REGIME POLICY DOWN TO THE GRASS ROOTS. THESE MOVES APPEAR AIMED AT BALANCING A NEW COALITION OF THE PARTY, BUREAUCRACY, AND MILITARY , ONE THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE A SORELLY NEEDED SENSE OF NATIONAL UNITY. THE POSSIBILITIES OF HOLDING A PARTY CONGRESS OR CONVENING THE NATIONAL PEOPLE' S CONGRESS WERE NOT TALKED ABOUT IN THE FIRST QUARTER AND APPEARED TO BE IN ABEYANCE. HOWEVER, TENG' S REHABILITATION MAY NOW MARK A NEW PHASE IN THE PLANNING FOR SUCH MAJOR EVENTS.

CRITICISM OF LIN PIAO-- CROSSCURRENTS

3. AS PRESCRIBED IN THE JANUARY 1 EDITORIAL, THE CAMPAIGN TO CRITICIZE LIN PIAO AND HIS GROUP HAS BEEN GIVEN TOP PRIORITY IN DOMESTIC PROPAGANDA. THE NEED FOR THIS IS NOW CLEARER. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SERIOUS DIFFERENCES OF OPINION, OVER THE MERITS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, THE CORRECT ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, AND THE PROPER TARGETS FOR CRITICISM, ARE FUELING SHARP DEBATES. THE LEFTISTS APPEAR TO BE ON THE DEFENSIVE. THEY PROBABLY ARE BEHIND CURRENT INSTRUCTIONS THAT LIN SHOULD BE VIEWED AS AN ULTRA- RIGHTIST AND THAT THE ATTACK ON HIM MUST NOT BE TURNED INTO AN ATTACK ON THE LEFT OR A REPUDIATION OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION FOR ITS ULTRA- LEFT EXCESSES. THE LEFTISTS PROBABLY ARE MAKING SOME PRACTICAL ADJUSTMENTS IN ACCOMMODATING TO THE RETURN OF TENG AND OTHER " RIGHTIST" TARGETS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

4. CRITICISM OF THE MILITARY' S PERFORMANCE IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS MAY ALSO BE REFLECTED IN WARNINGS NOT TO REOPEN " OLD ACCOUNTS OF HISTORY" AND BY DIRECTIVES TO POSTPONE RECTIFICATION OF " WORK STYLES," AND TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LIN' S CRIMES AND BAD INFLUENCE AND THE UNRELATED MISTAKES OF OTHERS DUE TO " INE
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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUCCESSION-- THE UNFACED TASK

8. BUT THE HEART OF THE CENTER'S WEAKNESS REMAINS THE
SUCCESSION QUESTION, UNSOLVED AND FROM INDICATIONS THUS FAR THIS
YEAR APPARENTLY SHELVED, AWAITING THE WORKING OUT OF THE CURRENT
PHASE OF STRATEGY. THE AGING TEAM OF MAO AND CHOU CONSTITUTE
THE CENTER: MAO STILL POTENTIALLY CAPABLE OF HURLING
THUNDERBOLTS, HOLDING HIMSELF BACK FROM PUBLIC DISPLAY EXCEPT IN
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WHERE HIS STELLAR PERFORMANCE WAS HIS UNIQUE
MEETING WITH DR. KISSINGER IN FEBRUARY, WHILE CHOU WAXES STRONGER
IN HIS ROLE AS THE FUNCTIONING REGENT AND HEIR- APPARENT.

9. KALEIDOSCOPIC INDICATIONS, MIXED WITH A LOT OF SPECULATION
AND RUMOR, HAVE PUT FORWARD FIRE ONE AND THEN ANOTHER OF THE
LESSER REGIME FIGURES AS THIRD IN LINE; CURRENT FRONT RUNNERS
INCLUDE DENLACTO MILITARY CHIAZ YEHNHIENT- YING, WHO HAS ASSUMED
TOP RANK ON OCCASIONS WHEN CHOU WAS ABSENT FROM PEKING, CHEXG

CHUN- CHIAO, SHANGHAI'S CHIEF, WHO HAS PUT IN VERY ACTIVE, STRONG
APPEARANCES; AND CHIANG CHING, MAO'S WIFE WHO REMAINS A SHADOWY
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FIGURE, BUT ONE TO BE COUNTED AMONG CONTENDERS FOR POSITION IN
THE SUCCESSION. REGIONAL MILITARY STRONGMEN, MANCURIA'S CHEN
HSI- LIEN AND EAST CHINA'S HSU SHIH- YU, BOTH POLITBURO MEMBERS,
REMAIN IN THE FASTNESS OF THEIR PROVINCIAL BASTIONS AND CONTINUE
TO LOOK IMPORTANT AS FUTURE KING- MAKERS. CHEN IN PARTICULAR HAS
LOOKED ACTIVE AND POLITICALLY INNOVATIVE IN HIS REGION. IN SUM,
WE THINK INDICATIONS STILL FAVOR AN ATTEMPT AT A COLLECTIVE
LEADERSHIP AFTER MAO AND CHOU, AND TENG'S REHABILITATION, AGAIN,
FURTHER SUGGESTS THIS. NOTHING LIKE A POLITICAL SWEEPSTAKES IS

VISIBLE AT PRESENT.

YOUTH-- THE SUCCESSOR GENERATION

10. YOUTH IS HAVING A MOMENT IN THE LIMELIGHT WITH THE REBUILDING OF THE YOUTH LEAGUE AND OTHER MASS ORGANIZATIONS, BUT THIS MAY PROVE TO BE A TEMPORARY DIVERSION OF THEIR POLITICAL ENERGIES AND THEIR STRIVING FOR UPWARD MOBILITY. YOUTH IS NOT CONSPICUOUS AMONG THE NEW CIVILIAN PARTY SECRETARIES BEING ADDED TO PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES, AND NO NEW YOUNG FACES HAVE APPEARED AT THE CENTER SO FAR THIS YEAR. SHANGHAI'S YOUTHFUL, FAST-RISING NUMBER THREE LEADER, WANG HUNG- WEN, AND HUNAN'S CHIEF, HUA KUO- FENG, HAVE DIVIDED THEIR TIME BETWEEN DUTIES AT HOME AND THEIR NOW- FAMILIAR RANKINGS AS PRINCIPALS (WITH UNREVEALED DUTIES) AT THE CENTER.

1. BUT WANG AND HUA ARE EXCEPTIONS AT PRESENT, AND WHAT BEARS WATCHING MOST IS THE UBIQUITOUS WRANGLING BETWEEN THE OLD REVOLUTIONARIES OF THE LONG ARCH AND LIBERATION, AND THE TWO- DECADES- LATER ACTIVISTS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. WITH MORE URBAN SCHOOL GRADUATES SCHEDULED TO BE PRESSED INTO UNPOPULAR RURAL ASSIGNMENTS THIS YEAR THERE IS FUEL IN YOUTHFUL FRUSTRATIONS WHICH, IF BOOSTED BY SUFFICIENT ECONOMIC DISCONTENT AMONG THE MASSES, COULD BE DETONATED BY SUCCESSION STRUGGLES. THROUGH STRAITS LIKE THESE, THE REGIME MANEUVERED IN THE FIRST QUARTER

OF THIS YEAR LIKE OLD PROS.

SINO- U. S. RELATIONS- SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

12. CHINA'S DEVELOPING RELATIONS WITH THE US CLAIM AN IMPORTANT HOLD ON CHINESE PUBLIC ATTENTION AT THIS TIME. AS LIAO CHENG- CHIH POINTED OUT IN HIS MARCH 12 YOMIURI INTERVIEW, IT TAKES TIME TO
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CHANGE POPULAR ATTITUDES. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT MAO HAS MADE A RARE PUBLIC COMMITMENT OF HIS PERSONAL AUTHORITY IN SUPPORT OF IMPROVED SINO- AMERICAN RELATIONS. THIS WAS SHOWN IN FEBRUARY BY HIS EXCEPTIONAL MEETING WITH DR. KISSINGER AND THE FOLLOW- THROUGH PROPAGANDA ACCORDED TO THIS EVENT IN CHINA. AND THIS SALLY BY MAO WAS PARALLELED BY THE MAJOR MASS PUBLIC OCCASION OF THE QUARTER, THE FEBRUARY 28 PRONOUNCEMENTS ABOUT TAIWAN.

13. IN THE FEBRUARY 28 STATEMENTS THE CHINESE PEOPLE WERE TOLD FOR THE FIRST TIME WHAT THE REGIME BELIEVES IT HAS GAINED FROM THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT NIXON AND THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE. THEY WERE TOLD THAT TAIWAN WAS NEARER TO RECOVERY, BY POLITICAL MEANS, AND THAT THERE WAS AN ANCILLARY UNDERSTANDING WITH WASHINGTON

AGAINST INVOLVEMENT IN TAIWAN BY A THIRD PARTY, I. E. THE SOVIET UNION. IN PARTY, THIS PUBLIC ATTENTION TO PRC- U. S. DEVELOPMENTS COULD BE EXPLAINED BY THE REGIME' S DESIRE TO GAIN MUCH- NEEDED CREDIT FOR ITS MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL INTERESTS. BUT THERE ARE ALSO INDICATIONS OF SUBTLE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE U. S. IN SOME REGIME CIRCLES.

14. THE MOST INTRIGUING OF THESE INDICATIONS IS AN OPERA WITH ANTI- AMERICAN OVERTONES WHICH IS CURRENTLY PLAYING TO ENTHUSIASTIC AND SLYLY VEILED ACCLAIM IN EAST CHINA'S NANKING MILITARY REGION, WHERE A NUMBER OF NATIONAL LEADERS HAVE LOCAL BASES. ROUGHLY HALF OF THE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO, INCLUDING CHIANG CHING, COULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE OPERA'S PRESENT TOUR. BUT THUS FAR THERE HAVE BEEN NO COMMENTARIES CALLING ATTENTION TO THE OPERA'S ANTI- AMERICAN THEME, THE ESSENCE OF WHICH IS THAT CHINA WILL REBUFF AMERICAN CHEATING UNDER THE GUISE OF NEGOTIATIONS. MAO AND CHOU PROBABLY CANNOT QUibble WITH THAT AS LOYAL ADVICE. BUT CHOU' S REPORTED REMARKS MARCH 8, WHEN HE TOLD AN AUDIENCE OF FOREIGNERS AND POLITBURO LEFTISTS THAT THE LIN PIAO CASE IS STILL OPEN, COULD BE A WARNING TO RIVACING FACTIONS THAT THE AGING BUT STILL DOMINANT MASTERS OF THE CENTER WILL NOT SUFFER EGREGIOUS HECTORING.

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